

REMARKS

Claims 37-42 are all of the claims currently pending in the application. In the Office Action, however, Applicants note that the Examiner inadvertently examined original claims 1-31 on the merits (e.g., see the Office Action Summary form).

In this regard, Applicants note that a first Preliminary Amendment was filed on November 7, 2007, in which original claims 1-31 were canceled, and new claims 32-36 were added. Subsequently, Applicants note that a second Preliminary Amendment was filed on March 5, 2008, in which claims 32-36 were canceled, and new claims 37-42 were added.

On the Office Action Summary form, the Examiner has indicated that the Office Action is responsive to the communication filed on May 9, 2008. In this regard, based on Applicants' review of the PAIR system, it is noted that on May 9, 2008, the International Bureau appears to have forwarded directly to the USPTO certified copies of the foreign priority documents, as well as a copy of the specification, claims, abstract and drawings as originally filed in the International Application. Applicants note that the above-noted documents were not submitted to the USPTO on May 9, 2008 by Applicants, but instead, as noted above, appear to have been submitted directly to the USPTO from the International Bureau.

In view of the foregoing, Applicants kindly request that the Examiner issue a new Office Action, in which claims 37-42 are examined on the merits. With respect to claims 37-42, Applicants note that these claims directly correspond to the allowed claims in the counterpart Japanese application, and that a Request for Participation in the Patent Prosecution Highway Program filed on March 5, 2008 has been granted.

If the Examiner has any questions regarding the comments above, Applicants kindly request that the Examiner contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

The Commissioner is authorized to charge any deficiency or to credit any overpayment associated with this communication to Deposit Account No. 23-0975.

Respectfully submitted,

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/Kenneth W. Fields/

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